Butler Institute for Families
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

First Impressions
OF ROUTT COUNTY

Routt County Child Care Needs Assessment

September 2023

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

There is a child care crisis in Routt County, Colorado. While there are not enough child care spots for the number of children who need care from birth through age 8, the situation is particularly challenging for families with infants and toddlers. Even when child care spots exist, they frequently do not meet families' needs in terms of hours of availability, location, and quality. To identify a plan to address gaps in the system, the Craig-Scheckman Family Foundation (CSFF) and First Impressions of Routt County commissioned this needs assessment in October 2022 to clearly understand the state of early care and education (ECE) in the county.

Routt is a rural county in northwest Colorado that is home to approximately 25,000 people, including 1,035 children under 5 years old.[1] The largest population center in the county is Steamboat Springs, with a population of just over 13,300 in 2022.[2] Major economic sectors include tourism and hospitality, agriculture, and energy and mining.[3] The workforce that supports Routt's economy includes many working families with young children birth through age 8 who need regular care while their parents are at work.

Between October 2022 and July 2023, researchers from the Butler Institute for Families at the University of Denver (Butler) collected data to understand the supply of and demand for ECE services of children birth through age 8 in Routt County. The needs assessment used secondary data, interviews and focus groups, and surveys to collect data from ECE providers, families, and

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[1] American Community Survey. (2021). *ACS 5-year estimates subject tables*. https://data.census.gov/table?q=age+in+Routt+County,+Colorado&tid=ACSST5Y2021.S0101

[2] US Census. (2022). U.S. Census quick facts. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/steamboatspringscitycolorado,routtcountycolorado,US/PST045222

[3] Steamboat Springs Chamber. (2023, August 13). *Key industries*. https://www.steamboatchamber.com/economic-development/business-community/key-industries/

systems-level partners. See Appendix A for more detail on the methodology for this study.

Family Experiences with the Current State of Early Care and Education in Routt County

Families with young children in Routt County are struggling to find and access ECE services. This report begins by highlighting their lived experiences because the families who provided feedback for this needs assessment make the strongest case for the urgency of addressing the current state of ECE services in Routt County.

Searching for Care

The struggle for families begins with their search for ECE services in Routt County. According to the family survey, 97% of families with infants, 99% of families with toddlers, and 85% of families with preschoolers say it is hard for their families to find care. Families who participated in focus groups shared more about their experiences searching for care, offering insight into these survey responses.

Poor Experiences Searching for Care. Families described their search for care as both stressful and labor intensive, which was primarily due to a lack of information about availability as well as the unclear and inconsistent use of waitlists by many providers. Some families navigated this situation by investing a significant amount of time and energy into calling and following up with providers. One parent recalled, "I had to call [our provider] every single day...until

"[There is a desperation about looking [for care] that feels wild. And as a parent, it's not something I want to feel."

the day that [they] said, 'Yes, I have a space for you.' And if I hadn't called on that day, someone else would've gotten it." She went on to add how this took a toll on her as a new mother: "I think when you're juggling a newborn and trying to figure out how to keep a child alive and keep your senses about you,

that is an added stress that I really wish…didn't have to be there." Needing a combination of determination and luck to find and access ECE services leaves many families without care or in care arrangements that poorly meet their needs.

An Added Challenge in the Search for Infant Care. During focus groups, families shared that their search for infant care was made more difficult by outdated or incorrect information. One parent shared, "I found…[a] website [with] every in-home [provider] and facility that was registered. And the thing that was a little bit unfortunate about it…is quite a few places were listed as taking newborns and they weren't. They didn't take them." The limited availability of care for infants is already a challenge for families, and experiences with outdated or incorrect information in their search for care added to families' frustration.

A Lack of Options. Families feel like they do not have options in their search for ECE services. There was even an objection to the use of the word "search" to describe efforts to find and access care. A parent explained, "In big cities, it's a search. And in big cities, I hear about people who interview at different facilities to find the one that's right for their child. And I do not believe that that's the case in our community whatsoever. I have no power. I have whatever option is given to me." Rather, families describe not being able to prioritize anything other than whether someone is able to watch their child. One mother shared, "In an ideal world…we want a licensed provider who's [CPR certified], available all the hours we want, affordable, and where our kid is happy…but I think when we were in the chaos of trying to find care, we didn't have the luxury of even thinking about those things because there weren't options." As presented

> ### *Previewing the Ripple Effects of a Lack of Options*
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> *The limited care pushes families to accept arrangements that do not fully meet their needs or that are lower quality than they would otherwise prefer. Similarly, many providers shared that they are not motivated to participate in quality ratings because they know that families don't have the option to choose among providers with different quality levels.*
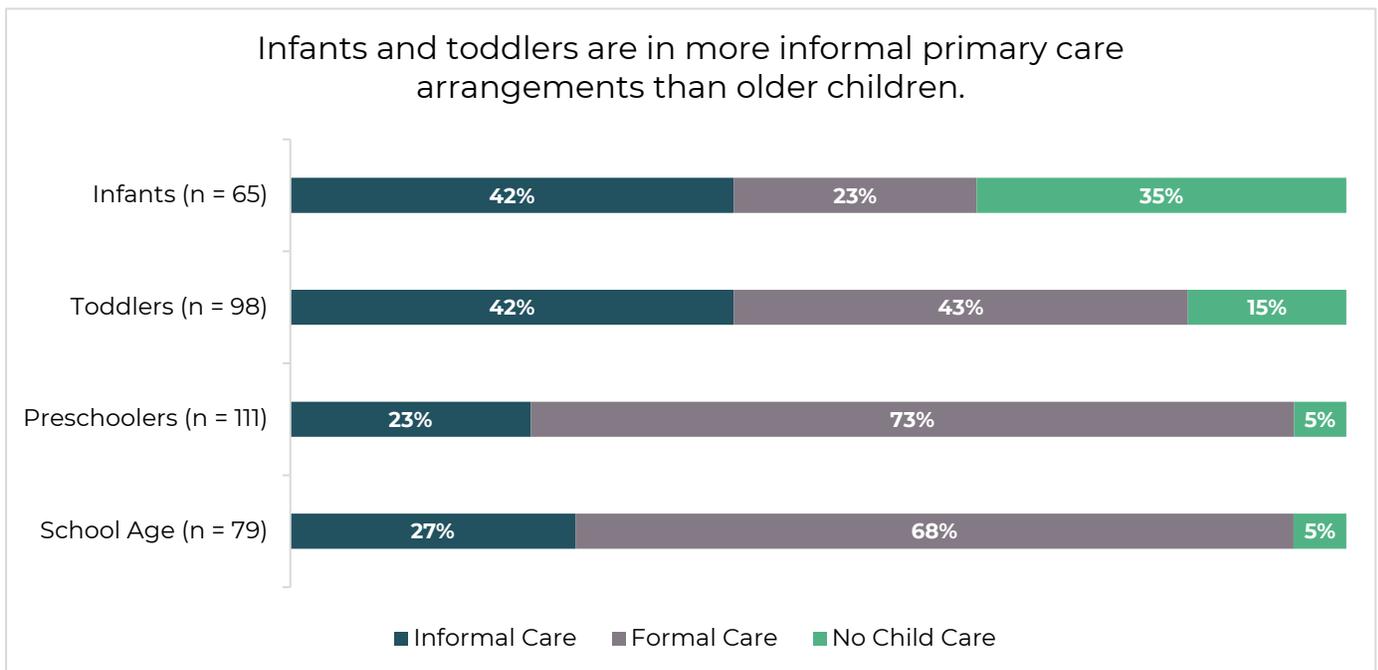
later in this report, the available data on child care supply within the county supports the perception among families that there is a lack of options.

Equity Concerns in the Search for Care. The time and labor-intensive nature of the search for ECE services also raises equity concerns. As one mother recalled, "I would call people, and most of the time there was no answer, no option to leave a message, or no list. [The provider would say,] 'Please call again another day.' And I can't.... It feels like people get into places, but I have no idea how." Families without the time, capacity, and resources to devote to an intensive search for care are likely not able to find care that meets their needs. It may also even lead some families to settle for care they feel is substandard because they have no other choice.

Current Care Arrangements

Many families undergo a stressful and demanding search for care only to end up in an unsatisfactory care arrangement. In general, the primary care arrangements for infants and toddlers tend to be more varied in the types of care arrangements and include more informal care arrangements. Most preschool- and school-age children are in child care centers or public schools.

Figure 1. Primary Care Arrangements by Age

Infants and toddlers are in more informal primary care arrangements than older children.

	Informal Care	Formal Care	No Child Care
Infants (n = 65)	42%	23%	35%
Toddlers (n = 98)	42%	43%	15%
Preschoolers (n = 111)	23%	73%	5%
School Age (n = 79)	27%	68%	5%

Dissatisfaction with Current Care Arrangements for Infants and Toddlers. Families are particularly dissatisfied with current care arrangements for their infants and toddlers. Most families with infants report informal care (defined as babysitters, family members, friends, neighbors, and child's other parent) as their primary care arrangement (42%), and 35% report having no child care arrangement at all (Figure 1). While the most common primary care arrangement for toddlers is a child care center (33%), 15% report no child care arrangements, and 42% report informal care. Fifty-eight percent of families with infants and 52% of families with toddlers say their current care arrangements are not their first choice for care (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Current Care as First Choice for Care by Age Group

More than half of families say current care arrangements for infants and toddlers are **not** their first choice for care.

	School Age (n = 78)	Preschoolers (n = 108)	Toddlers (n = 97)	Infants (n = 65)
Yes	74%	72%	48%	42%
No	26%	28%	52%	58%

■ No ■ Yes
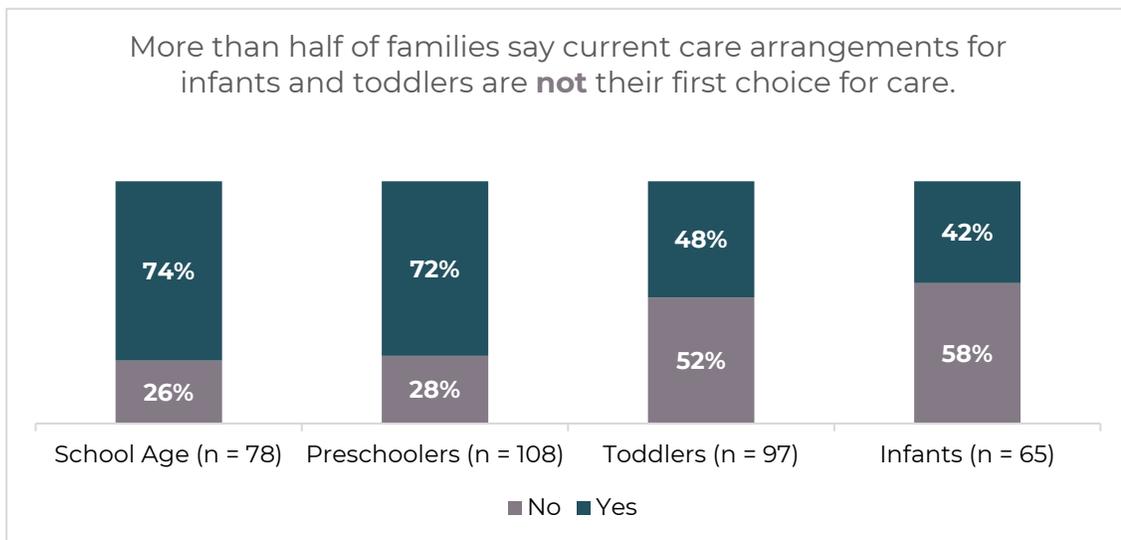
Unsurprisingly, 42% of families with infants and 35% of families with toddlers say their current care arrangements poorly meet their needs (Figure 3). Overall, current care arrangements for families with infants and toddlers are not the preferred care arrangements. Most families would prefer a child care center (Table 1), but the current center-based, licensed capacity is not able to meet this demand.

Figure 3. Ability of Current Care Arrangements to Meet Family Needs by Age Group

Families are more likely to say current care arrangements for infants **poorly** meet their need compared to care arrangements for older children.

School Age (n = 80)	Preschoolers (n = 109)	Toddlers (n = 98)	Infants (n = 66)
64% Well	79% Well	65% Well	58% Well
36% Poorly	21% Poorly	35% Poorly	42% Poorly

■ Poorly ■ Well
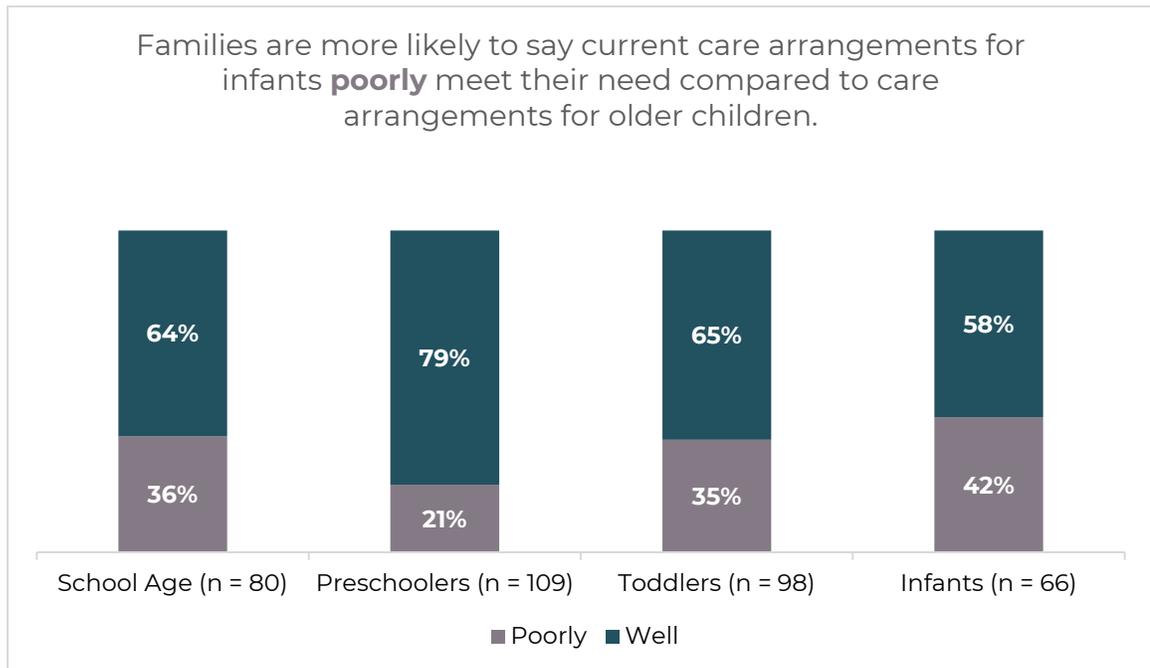
Infant/Toddler Care Arrangements for Spanish Speaking Families*

Current Care:

- For infant and toddler care, Spanish-speaking families are more likely to use informal care arrangements and use fewer types of child care options than English-speaking families. **
- Spanish-speaking families also did not report using family child care homes for children of any age.

Preferred Care:

- If cost were not a factor, 50% of Spanish-speaking families with infants and 82% of Spanish speaking families with toddlers would prefer a child care center as their primary care arrangement.
    - In a focus group with Spanish-speaking families some families shared that they did not seek out child care centers because they heard there were no spots available.

"[I haven't] looked for any spots in the daycare because people would tell [me] that it was very hard, so [I] never tried."

38%

of English-speaking families with toddlers report the child's other parent is their primary care arrangement.

50%

of Spanish-speaking families with toddlers report the child's other parent is their primary care arrangement.

*Note: Most of the Spanish-speaking family survey results were collected in June 2023 while English-speaking family survey responses were collected in February through May, which may have influenced responses for preschool and school age children given summer break.

**Statistically significant difference between Spanish-speaking families and English-speaking families in primary care arrangements for toddlers.

A Need for More Hours of Care. Families do not have the hours of care they need, which can drive dissatisfaction with current care arrangements. One parent said, "I'm thankful for what we have, but both our preschool and daycare are only 4 days a week. Luckily my job is flexible, and I just piece together working from home or taking PTO." Families are making the hours of care they have work for them, but this can mean reducing or changing work hours and spending hours arranging a patchwork of care. Additionally, some families identified a misalignment between the hours of operation of their care provider and their employer. One mother shared that she now arrives to work late because the hours she was able to drop her child off changed and reflected that "I'm still very lucky that we have her in a stable place, but it's not ideal."

A Final Note from Families

An Outsized Impact on Families. The current state of ECE in Routt County influences core aspects of families' lives, including shaping decisions about whether to have more children. As one family shared, "I have one 2-year-old, and then we hope to have another child. But frankly, child care has been a barrier for us in starting that process." Child care also shapes decisions, primarily the decisions of mothers, about careers. It is a factor that families consider when weighing whether to leave, stay, or return to the workforce, and it even influences decisions about the types of jobs they take. A mother shared, "I'm basically going to be a full-time, stay-at-home mom at this point, because that's what we can afford instead of daycare." Another

mother offered insight into her thinking behind her decision to continue working despite the cost of child care saying, "It feels worth it to pay for child care where I lose money, [because] at least then I don't exit the workforce. So, longer term, there's more earning potential." Families also described the influence that the state of ECE has on their decisions about where to move, both inside and outside of the county. Overall, the lack of ECE services in Routt County seems to be complicating already complicated decisions for families.

The State of Early Care and Education in Routt County

The current state of care and education in Routt County that families describe experiencing is reflected in the secondary data on supply and demand.

1,035

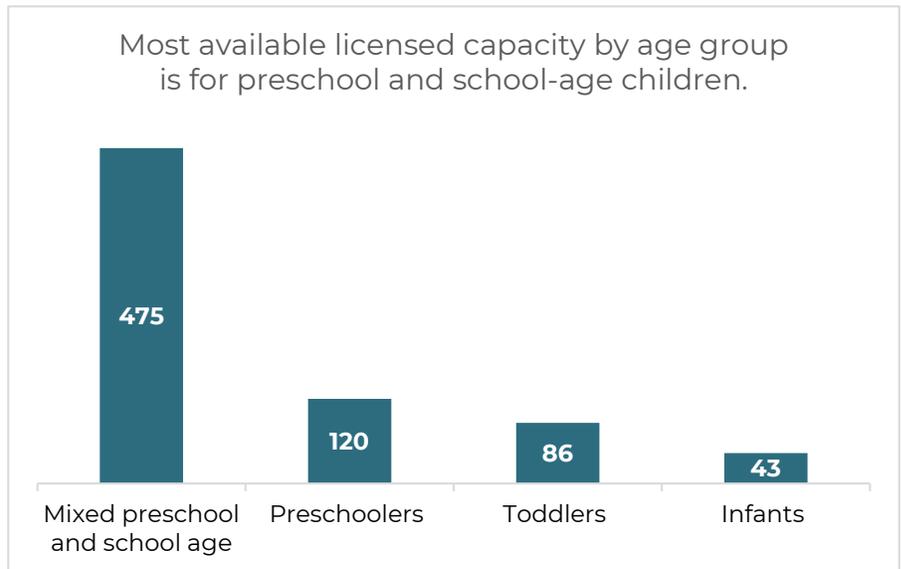**Children under 5 years in Routt County**

Greater Demand Than Supply. There are more children ages birth to 5 years than the available licensed capacity can serve. According to the American Community Survey, there were 1,035 (±97) children under 5 years old (0 to <60 months) in Routt County in the latest 2021 data.[4] Meanwhile, according to the *Colorado Licensed Child Care Facilities Report*, as of August 2023, there were 724 center-based licensed capacity child care spots and approximately 69 licensed home capacity child care spots for children ages birth to 5 years (0 to 60 months).[5] Of the center-based, licensed capacity, 475 (66%) are in mixed preschool/school-age settings (36+ months), and another

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[4] American Community Survey. (2021). *ACS 5-year estimates subject tables.* https://data.census.gov/table?q=age+in+Routt+County,+Colorado&tid=ACSST5Y2021.S0101

[5] Colorado Department of Early Childhood. (2023). *Colorado licensed child care facilities report* [Data set]. Colorado Information Marketplace. Retrieved August 18, 2023, from https://data.colorado.gov/Early-childhood/Colorado-Licensed-Child-Care-Facilities-Report/a9rr-k8mu

120 (17%) are for preschool (39 to 60 months). Only 43 center-based child care spots (6%) are licensed for infants (0 to 18 months), and another 86 (12%) are licensed for toddlers (18 to 36 months). [6] According to the provider survey administered as part of this needs assessment, across all family child care

Figure 4. Center-based Licensed Capacity by Age

Most available licensed capacity by age group is for preschool and school-age children.

- Mixed preschool and school age: 475
- Preschoolers: 120
- Toddlers: 86
- Infants: 43

home owners, the total number of children they report typically serving totaled five infants (10%), 24 toddlers (48%), and 21 preschool-age children (48%). It should be noted that licensed capacity reflects the maximum theoretical child care spots and not the actual available spots.[7] Providers may,

and often do, choose to serve fewer children than their licensed capacity allows for a variety of reasons. One reason is to help them navigate staffing shortages without needing to close rooms or disrupt care to families if a teacher or

Approximately 793

Licensed <u>capacity</u> to serve children 5 years and under

Note:. Licensed capacity does not reflect the actual number of available slots. Industry-wide most providers operate at approximately 85% of licensed capacity.[7]

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[6] Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

[7] This figure has been used in previous child care cost estimation models nationally to estimate efficiency and has been vetted by providers around Colorado.

caregiver were to quit. Many providers also choose to serve fewer children than licensed capacity allows to offer better adult-child ratios for quality reasons.

Families Prefer Formal Care Arrangements

While not all families would prefer a formal care arrangement, many families would. According to the family survey, a child care center is the number one preferred care arrangement for families with children ages birth to 5. Although the most common licensed provider type in Routt County is a child care center (Table 1), because of the current center-based, licensed capacity, the county is not likely to be able to meet families' preference for this type of care arrangement. As of May 2023, the licensed, center-based capacity in Routt County was 43 infants and 86 toddlers. A child care center is the preferred primary care arrangement for:

- Fifty-two percent of families with infants (*n* = 32)
- Seventy-one percent of families with toddlers (*n* = 67)

An additional 11% of families with infants and 6% of families with toddlers would prefer a family child care home.

Table 1 *Preferred primary care arrangement by age*				
	Infants (*n* = 62)	Toddlers (*n* = 94)	Preschoolers (*n* = 108)	School Aged (*n* = 75)
Child care center	52%	71%	56%	23%
Babysitter/nanny	16%	12%	5%	11%
Child's other parent	13%	7%	6%	4%
Family child care home	11%	6%	5%	1%
Other family member	5%	1%	0%	7%
Public school	3%	2%	29%	55%

The Influence on Quality. The current state of early care and education in Routt County may have an impact on quality as well. Since demand is greater than supply, many providers have come to see the cost of participating in the Colorado Shines quality rating system as outweighing the benefits. "When we started doing Colorado Shines, it was kind of a marketing tool…But now with the shortage…it's never asked [about]. People don't care anymore. They just want spots. So that incentive has kind of been lost," explained one provider. In fact, 56% of licensed providers in Routt County are at level 1 on the Colorado Shines Quality Rating Scale, [8] meaning they are licensed and meet basic health and safety requirements, but do not participate in any formal quality improvement or ongoing rating process beyond that. Few programs are at a level 3 or above (out of 5), which programs attain by pursuing recognition within five different domains of program quality and having one or more onsite assessments to evaluate the program and classrooms by an external assessor. However, families do care about quality. One hundred percent of families who responded to the survey said that caregiver quality, more than any other factor, was important to them. However, as families explained in focus groups, they often feel they cannot prioritize this in the face of limited options.

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[8] Colorado Department of Early Childhood. (2023). *Colorado licensed child care facilities report* [Data set]. Colorado Information Marketplace. Retrieved August 18, 2023, from https://data.colorado.gov/Early-childhood/Colorado-Licensed-Child-Care-Facilities-Report/a9rr-k8mu

Important Features of Care for Spanish-Speaking Families

On the family survey, several features of caregivers, affordability, and transportation emerged as important factors for Spanish-speaking families when selecting care.

Figure 5. Important Factors for Spanish-Speaking Families Searching for Care

Factor	Spanish	English
Ability to care for all your children	100%	85%
Ability to meet special physical or behavioral needs	98%	43%
Caregivers who speak your family's language	93%	66%
Affordability	100%	93%
Transportation	83%	43%

☐ % of Importance
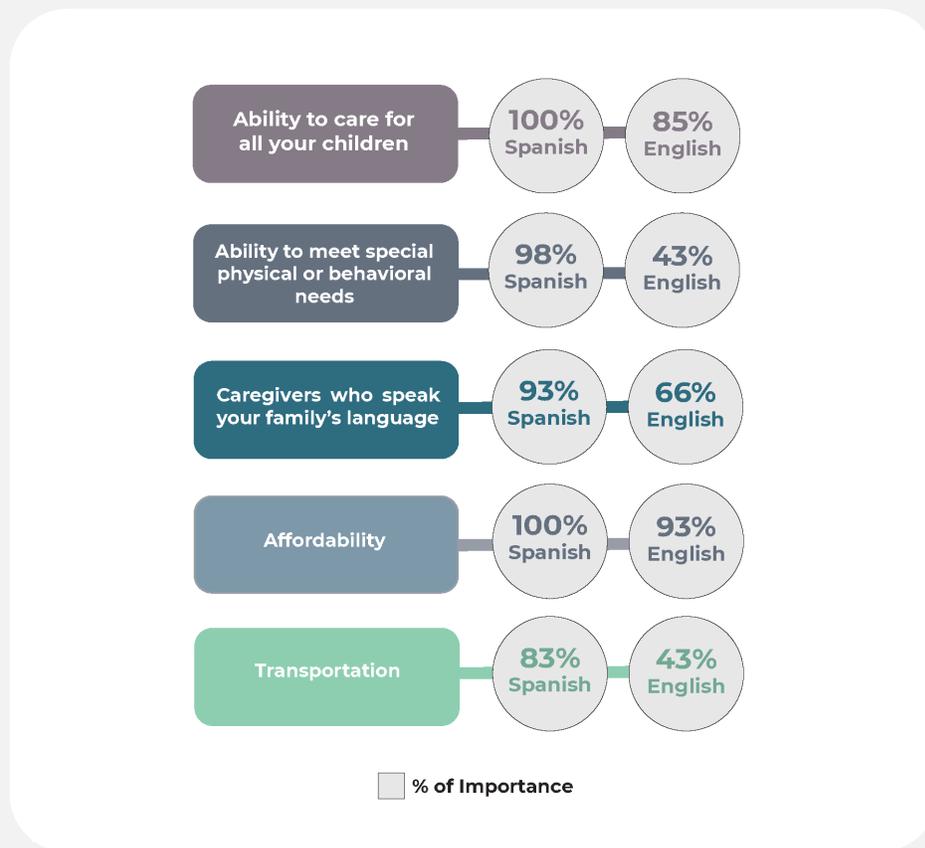
Factors Contributing to the Lack of Early Care and Education in Routt County

This needs assessment identifies two major factors that are limiting the supply of early care and education in Routt County. The first is a shortage of qualified staff that is compounded by low compensation and the cost of housing. The second is the limited supply of family child care homes.

Early Childhood Caregiver Shortage

On average, providers who responded to the provider survey report being fully staffed at seven teaching positions. They also report experiencing an average of one and a half unfilled teaching positions in the past 30 days.

A Limited Pool of Qualified Staff. More than any other factor, the availability of qualified staff, including substitutes, makes it hard for providers to begin, continue, and expand ECE services in Routt County. One provider said, "I think [for] sustaining our program, I'd say the biggest barrier we have is finding qualified employees." They went on to explain that it is not a matter of hiring just anyone because it is

Figure 6. Staffing Factors That Make It Hard to Provide ECE Services

a job that requires specific knowledge and competencies: "If people don't have experience and they don't know what they're doing in the classroom, that doesn't really make it easier." This theme was echoed in the provider
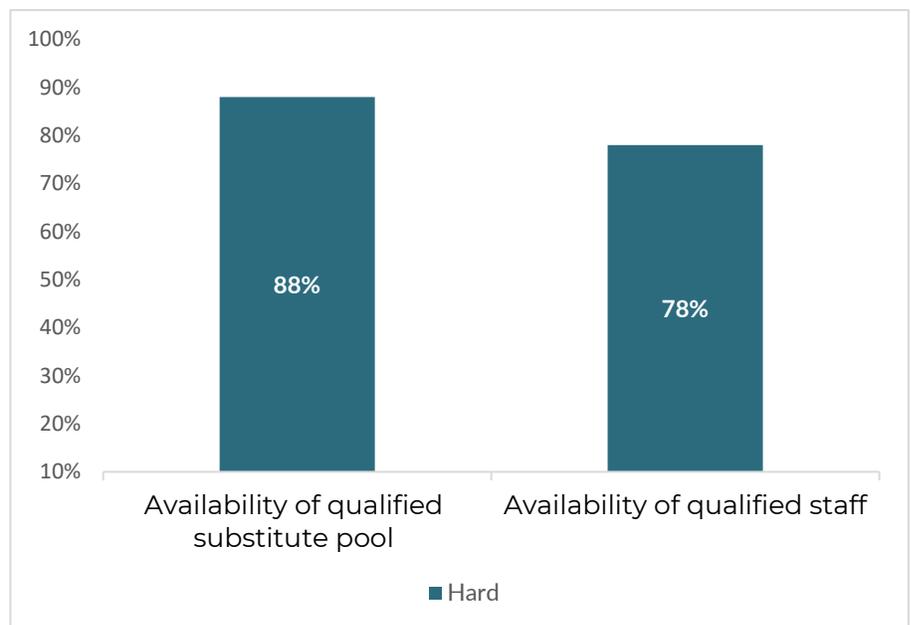
survey where providers say the availability of qualified staff, including substitutes, makes it hard to provide ECE services in Routt County (Figure 6). Providers also describe feeling anxious when new places open or are discussed because they see those places as competing for a limited pool of staff they also draw from. One provider shared, "Every time somebody talks about opening another center, it's exciting but it's also nerve-wracking." They explained that their worry is that they would lose some of their teaching staff to the new center, which would then make it more difficult for them to continue offering ECE services.

Low Compensation and The Cost of Housing

Housing was seen by system leaders, providers, and families as a major contributor to the early childhood staffing shortage. A look at fair market rent (FMR) and the living wage for Routt County alongside the estimated median hourly labor market wage for child care workers in Routt County shows why. Early childhood workers simply cannot afford to live and work in Routt County.

"We can't hire somebody for $15 an hour and expect them to pay the rent that is wanted here."
– A child care provider

$1,695[9]

**FMR for a two-bedroom apartment
in Routt County in 2023.**

$20.06/hour[10]

**Living wage in Routt County for one adult
with no children in 2023.**

$17.55/hour[11]

**Estimated 2022 mean hourly labor market wage
rates for child care workers in Routt County.**

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[9] Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Policy Development and Research. (2023). *Fair market rents (40th percentile rents)* [Data set]. HUD User. https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html#query_2023

[10] Glasmeier, Amy K. *Living wage calculator*. (2023). Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

[11] Colorado Department of Labor and Environment. (2023). *Labor market information gateway*. https://www.colmigateway.com/vosnet/lmi/profiles/profileDetails.aspx?session=occdetail&valueName=occupation&section=employmentWage

Impact on Child Care Supply. System leaders also identified the staffing shortage as a significant contributor to the limited child care supply in the county in the ways it hinders providers from beginning, continuing, and expanding services.

One system leader offered an example of the staffing shortage preventing a school district from beginning to offer ECE services: "[A] school district was considering trying to start an early childhood facility, but...opening up another facility just didn't really make sense because they don't have enough staff as it is." Another system leader illustrated how it affects providers from expanding services as well: "I feel space and staffing go hand in hand. Because even if we did get another space, I'm not sure at this point if we would have the staff to allow more kids in that space." System leaders, along with families who had been affected by closures, identified several child care providers who had closed because they were unable to secure staffing.

The staffing shortage further contributes to the limited availability of child care spots by decreasing the number of children current providers are able or willing to serve. One provider explained, "We could easily enroll 10 more kids here, but we just don't want to overwhelm the staff...then when somebody is out or quits..., we can still manage licensing ratios." The staffing shortage may also be worsening the lack of infant care. Another provider explained, "For staffing [infant] rooms, it's difficult because it's a low ratio and right now the infant rooms are closed on Friday because we don't have enough staff."

Classroom Volunteers. In a focus group with providers, one child care center shared that they have used family members volunteering in the classroom as a strategy to ease their experiences with the staffing shortage. However, there are regulations that outline when volunteers can count towards ratio. One provider said, "We can't just have anybody volunteer in the classroom anymore. They have to pass their background check; they have to have certain courses before they can step in...We can't count a parent in the classroom unless they have certain qualifications." Indeed, the Rules Regulating Child Care Centers That Provide Less Than 24-Hour Care state, "Volunteers who are used to meet staff to child ratio must be equally qualified as an Early Childhood Teachers, Assistant Early Childhood Teachers, or Staff Aide. Equally qualified volunteers must have complete staff records as required in Section 7.702.35 and complete training requirements as required in Section 7.702.42."[12] It is important to note that volunteers can still be supervised in the classroom if they have also received instruction on the center's policies and procedures.

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[12] Colorado Department of Human Services Social Services Rules: Child Care Facility Licensing, 12 CCR 2509-8 § 7.702.45 (2023). https://www.sos.state.co.us/CCR/GenerateRulePdf.do?ruleVersionId=10806&fileName=12%20CCR%202509-8 ?

Lack of Family Child Care Homes

According to a study of Colorado's family child care homes in 2019, the state exceeded the national average in the rate of overall decline in family child care homes.[13] In Routt County, as of May 2023, there are fewer family child care homes compared to the state (see Table 2). There were eight family child care homes comprising 21% of the provider types in Routt County while comprising 31% of the provider types in Colorado.

> ### Key Regulations Governing Family Child Care Homes
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> - General Rules for Child Care Facilities (7.701)
> - Rules Regulating Family Child Care Homes (7.707)
> - Rules Regulating Special Activities (7.719)
> - Family Child Care Homes that also accept Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) funds are also governed by CCCAP rules (3.900)

Contributing to The Lack of Infant Care. Potential infant care providers shared that they feel family child care homes are effectively disincentivized to serve infants, which contributes to the shortage of infant care in the county. In a focus group with providers, a family child care home provider discussed how regulations currently make it difficult to serve a mixed-age group. In her experience, regulations for being able to keep eyes on napping babies were not feasible while also meeting the needs and safety requirements of preschool-age children. According to Rules Regulating Family Child Care Homes, "All sleeping infants must be physically observed at least every ten (10)

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[13] Colorado Department of Early Childhood. (2023). *Colorado Senate Bill 19-063 infant and family child care action plan: A strategic action plan to address infant and family child care home shortages in Colorado.* https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5679be9605f8e24bd8be467a/t/5de967f17f43ba5 febdac6ad/1575577605076/V2_REVISED112719_FINAL_SB63+Report.pdf

minutes by the primary provider or a staff member."[14] This provider shared that this rule left them with the challenge of navigating how to check on a sleeping infant in one room while older children were in another room. Another family child care home provider with experience serving infants echoed this challenge, adding that it is "really hard to keep everybody happy" when you have an infant in a mixed-age group.

Table 2. Program Types in Routt County Compared to Colorado				
Program Type	**Routt County**		**Colorado**	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**
Child Care Center/Preschool Program	7	44%	2115	46%
School-age child care center	12	31%	969	21%
Family child care home	8	21%	1413	31%
Resident camp	2	5%	103	2%

Note. Colorado data is from the Colorado Licensed Child Care Facilities Dashboard, August 2023. Routt County data is from the Colorado Licensed Child Care Facilities Report, August 2023.

A Need for Support Navigating Licensing. In the focus group with providers and interviews with system leaders, a lack of information and support navigating licensing emerged as a barrier to becoming a family child care home provider. Providers affirmed that navigating licensing can be a significant hurdle. One owner of a family child care home said, "When you do look at the rules, it does feel overwhelming. And there used to be a lot more support...for home providers. There were a lot more educational opportunities

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[14] Colorado Department of Human Services Social Services Rules: Child Care Facility Licensing, 12 CCR 2509-8 § 7.707.75 (2023). https://www.sos.state.co.us/CCR/GenerateRulePdf.do?ruleVersionId=10806&fileName=12%20CCR%202509-8

available for home providers." They added that they felt it was easier for people to just not get licensed. This idea was echoed in systems-level partner interviews. One system leader said, "I don't think people understand what's involved [with becoming a provider]." They explained that there may be people who are already providing care for their own children who do not know what it takes to become licensed and that they could get paid if they were able to care for another child.

More Information for Families. In the 2019 report on Colorado's family child care homes, stakeholders identified that parent misperceptions of family child care homes may be contributing to the declining availability of family child

care homes.[15] The report suggested that parents do not value family child care homes as much as center-based care or see them as well regulated as child care centers. There may be similar misperceptions and a lack of information about family child care homes among families in Routt County. In a focus group with families for this needs assessment, one parent echoed this idea, saying they did not know a lot about family child care homes. They asked, "What does in-home mean? Why is it different from a provider? Can I trust them? What licensing have they gone through?" This may explain, in part, why center-based care is the preferred care arrangement for families with children ages 0 to 5 years, with only 11% of families with infants and 6% of families with toddlers preferring a family child care home as their primary care arrangement.

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[15] Colorado Department of Early Childhood. (2023). *Colorado Senate Bill 19-063 infant and family child care action plan: A strategic action plan to address infant and family child care home shortages in Colorado.* https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5679be9605f8e24bd8be467a/t/5de967f17f43ba5febdac6ad/1575577605076/V2_REVISED112719_FINAL_SB63+Report.pdf

Needed Supports

The needs assessment asked families and providers to weigh in on what types of supports they most need to help them find and offer needed care, respectively. Both groups provided specific ideas for the help they believe is needed to improve the current state of ECE in the county.

Provider-Identified Supports to Help Start, Continue, or Expand Care

The providers who responded to the survey ranked a selection of supports that they believed would help their stability and growth (Table 3). Those who participated in the provider focus groups expanded upon why and how these supports could help them.

Financing and Funding. Focus group participants discussed financing and funding, the most needed support identified on the survey, as a key contributor to the low compensation in the field. Overall, they indicated that the lack of sufficient funding to support the sector results in low wages and an inability to recruit and retain quality staff. As one provider said in response to the question of what they would do if they had a magic wand, they would like to see the early childhood profession more valued. They defined value as "having enough funding to pay the teachers [a livable wage] so that they can live here [and] they can afford housing or get free housing because they do provide such a big service."

Table 3. Provider Ranked Support Needed to Help Them Stabilize and Grow	
Rank	**Support**
1	Financing/funding
2	Local professional development offerings
3	ECE Workforce development
4	Regulatory support (e.g., licensing)
5	Administrative support (e.g., payroll, enrollment)
6	Provider peer network
7	Business coaching
8	Marketing/outreach
9	Finding/getting space

Local Professional Development Offerings. The second most-needed support as ranked by providers is local professional development offerings, which is closely related to the need for qualified staff as well. One provider explained how it is easy enough for someone to work in a classroom in a way that meets licensing requirements, but they also need to have the skills and competencies to create a safe and nurturing environment, which goes well beyond basic qualifications. One provider said, "It's very easy to get somebody qualified, but I refuse to qualify somebody just for the sake of being able to keep a classroom open. I value our quality and safety so much more."

Providers also described professional development opportunities that were once available to them while suggesting similar opportunities are not currently available. One provider estimated that about 10 years ago, "[First Impressions] would bring in Lakeshore training, and [family child care providers] were able to piggyback with centers [on] some training because First Impressions facilitated that part." Another provider shared that there used to be a yearly, regional conference with a local chapter of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Regulatory Support. Ranked fourth, regulatory support emerged as something particularly helpful for family child care home providers. One provider shared that they believed this kind of support was more accessible previously than it is now: "I think that some of that [regulatory support] was happening through First Impressions...you were guided, and you were supported, and somebody held your hand because going through the licensing process is really daunting and people don't want to do it." This also emerged in a systems-level partner interview, during which they suggested the idea of a guide to help people learn how to become a licensed provider. As one systems-level partner explained, "I love the idea of having some sort of guide or some sort of centralized place where people can go and say, 'Okay, maybe I am interested in having a home daycare and taking four kids. What does that look like? How do I do that? What are the steps to get there?'"

Providers View First Impressions as a Needed Resource. Seventy-seven percent of providers said that First Impressions is helpful for starting ECE services in Routt County while 63% say they need First Impressions to help them grow ECE services as well (Figure 7). The focus groups for this needs assessment occurred shortly after a long period during which First Impressions was without staff. Since then, new staff have come on board. Several providers in the focus group were aware of this recent history as well. One provider said, "...Now [that] they have some people in place, I'm hopeful that that's going to start to turn things around and that they'll be a bigger voice for early childhood." The focus groups with providers suggest they valued the role First Impressions has played in supporting providers and are eager for First Impressions to resume that role.

Figure 7. Provider Reports of Organizations That Help Start or Grow ECE Services

Providers identified First Impressions and the Family Development Center Child Care Network as the most helpful for starting and growing ECE services.

Organization	Grow	Start
First Impressions of Routt County	63%	77%
Family Development Center Child Care Network	68%	74%
Early Learning Ventures	33%	46%
Steamboat Springs Workforce Center	31%	31%
Chamber of Commerce	22%	30%
Routt County Department of Environmental	61%	20%

■Grow ■Start

Traditional Business Support. Providers do not currently view community entities that typically serve more traditional businesses, such as the Chamber

of Commerce or Steamboat Springs Workforce Center, as very helpful for either starting or growing ECE services in the county (Figure 7). There is a potential opportunity for these more traditional business development organizations to play a more active role in supporting ECE providers as business entities within the community.

Supports Families Want to Help Them Find and Access Care

Families who responded to the survey identified whether a selection of supports would help them find and access care (Figure 8). Those who participated in the family focus groups expanded upon why and how these supports could help them.

Figure 8. Supports Families Would Find Helpful in Their Search for Care

Families would find a variety of supports helpful to their efforts to find and access child care. A website with real-time availability of child care would be most helpful.

Support	Helpful
General information on what to look for in child care	66%
Individualized help navigating options	77%
Child care tuition assistance	83%
Universal waitlist across all country programs/providers	88%
Website with real-time availability	98%

■ Helpful

More Accessible and Transparent Information From Providers. Families want more easily accessible information about their child care options. This would include information about real-time availability and waitlists, as well as other information about providers, such as cost and hours of operation. One parent explained that more transparency would help them feel empowered in the current state of ECE in the county: "I think it just gives

you a little bit more of that power back that you at least feel like you have an understanding. I can compare and contrast. I'm still going to be at the whim of whoever has space for me, but at least I feel a little bit more empowered to understand what I'm getting into."

Real-Time Availability. The support that nearly all families who responded to the survey (98%) said would be most helpful was a website with real-time availability. During focus groups, families expressed frustration at not knowing which providers had available spots. A parent explained why it would be helpful to have "a centralized place where all licensed providers were listed and where spots were visible," adding this would help them avoid missing out on an available spot by spending time contacting a program that did not have any availability. This idea was also echoed in an interview with a systems-level partner. They would like to see "a live status system or something that shows the place for people to go to. Especially because we are such...a transient location where people are [coming and going] in droves sometimes."

A Universal Waitlist. Eighty-eight percent of families who responded to the survey also said that a universal waitlist across all county programs and providers would help them find and access care. Waitlists were also a common topic that frequently emerged during focus groups. Many families expressed frustration that waitlists were either not used or not used transparently. As a result, families identified a universal waitlist as a needed support: "A transparent registration process would've been really helpful...It might not be perfect, the waitlist might be 2 years long, but at least [you] know that it's there, you can [get] on it, and it's systematic in some way." Families viewed a waitlist as essentially knowing what their chances were to get into a program and felt this was a critical piece of information for them to navigate their search for care.

"When we got the call that my daughter got a spot for the fall, it literally felt better than getting into college...I had no idea where we were on the [waitlist]...so then it was this huge surprise to me."

Other Information About Providers. During the focus groups with families, families expressed a desire for more information about providers that would help them find care that meets their family's needs. One parent wanted to know "cost and days available and hours available because that information can help people rule out the places that they shouldn't even bother contacting if it won't work." One family shared their experience with not knowing early on what their provider's hours of operation were: "We didn't know [children] weren't going to be allowed in until 8 o'clock until we had already enrolled him. I remember just feeling so depleted about that, and we were not excited about it…. I had to change my job at that point because…my [work began] at eight o'clock." Additionally, with 98% of families on the survey saying this is an important factor for them when selecting care, a program's hours and days of operation is one of the top two most important factors for families.

Support Navigating Child Care Tuition Assistance. Most families shared that child care tuition assistance would help them find and access ECE services. This support would be particularly helpful for Spanish-speaking families, as 100% of Spanish-speaking families rated it as helpful compared with 78% of English-speaking families. Only a small portion of families who responded to the survey indicated that they currently receive some form of tuition assistance (14%), suggesting tuition assistance might not be as widely

accessed or available as it could be. Several families in focus groups suggested that families need help navigating the child care subsidy system and learning about what options are available to them. One parent who works with providers shared, "We have people come through our door weekly that have no idea that we even have scholarships that we will help pay for their childcare services. So, a place that has all that information would be really incredible." Others advocated for this to be on a website with a calculator to help learn what you might qualify for. "I just like going to websites and finding all the information that I need. And I think finding out information about subsidies is really difficult," said one parent. "And most times it says, talk to your local care provider. And if you're not in a facility yet, you don't know who your local care provider is." Support navigating child care tuition assistance might help reduce the number of families who qualify for assistance but are not accessing it.

Support From Employers. In focus group discussions, families varied in their experiences with how employer policies either eased or complicated their child care needs. In one focus group, a couple of families proposed the idea that perhaps First Impressions could help employers understand what they can do to support families with young children. One parent said, "Maybe First Impressions could…be a resource for employers and [suggest] ways employers can be supportive of parents." In fact, this has been something First Impressions has partnered with the Steamboat Springs Chamber to do in the

past, producing the Routt County Family Forward Guidebook to support employers.[16] This guide is a resource for businesses to implement policies that help parents enter and stay in the workforce.

Additional Supports for Spanish-Speaking Families

In the search for ECE services, several supports emerged as potentially being more helpful for Spanish-speaking families. These families were more likely than English-speaking families to identify child care tuition assistance, individualized help navigating care options, and general information on what to look for in child care as helpful.

Table 4. Additional Supports for Spanish-Speaking Families			
		Unhelpful	**Helpful**
General information on what to look for in child care	English	41%	59%
	Spanish	5%	95%
Individualized help navigating options	English	28%	72%
	Spanish	2%	98%
Child care tuition assistance	English	22%	78%
	Spanish	0%	100%

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[16] Steamboat Springs Chamber. (n.d.). *Family forward guidebook.* https://assets.simpleviewinc.com/simpleview/image/upload/v1/clients/steamboat/First _Impressions_Guidebook_FINAL_2__f055762d-ff8c-472e-ab85-22377ce37d80.pdf

Recommendations

Throughout the needs assessment process, the research team collected suggestions from families, providers, and system partners about possible solutions to the shortage of ECE services in Routt County. These included suggestions to address several areas of concern:

- Workforce shortage
- Infant and toddler care shortage
- Family search inequities
- Affordability
- Equity
- Employer role

This section articulates the ideas that were generated in this process for future consideration and action by the community.

Workforce Strategies

The lack of a consistent, qualified, and well-compensated workforce is at the core of Routt County's ECE crisis. It is unlikely that there will be a balance in supply and demand for services in the foreseeable future until the community is able to address this pivotal issue. Low pay, lack of benefits, and housing expenses are important areas to address first.

Compensation. Families cannot afford to pay higher tuition costs than they already do, so livable wages for ECE professionals need to be subsidized through public, private, and/or philanthropic sources. Needs assessment participants recommended the creation of a tax initiative or special district to bring the wages of ECE professionals to a level where current educators would stay in the field and new ones could be recruited.

Benefits. In addition to livable salaries, ECE professionals need access to benefits, such as health insurance, retirement, and life insurance, which many small centers and family child care homes cannot afford. A tax initiative focused on compensation for ECE professionals could also provide funding to help fund benefit packages. Needs assessment participants offered another option to fund benefits—facilitating provider access to a shared benefits program, such as the Small Association Leadership Alliance (SALA) healthcare program, which is a health benefits and services program offered through the Steamboat Springs Chamber of Commerce. Similarly, school districts or county agencies might develop partnerships with ECE providers to provide staff with access to the benefits of those entities.

Housing. The issue of housing costs and shortages came up frequently in interviews and focus groups with families, providers, and systems partners. Needs assessment participants saw this issue as deeply intertwined with the ECE workforce shortage. However, participants identified solutions to address this concern, which included creating a housing subsidy for Routt County ECE professionals. One approach to this could be a program where a funder partners with apartment complexes to lease blocks of housing and then subsidizes a portion of the monthly rent for educators. Participants offered

other ideas, such as allocating a portion of an early childhood tax initiative fund and providing subsidies for early educators' housing and either requiring or incentivizing new development to build or pay into a fund for building affordable housing for early childhood professionals.

Building an ECE Workforce Pipeline. While the priority for workforce development needs to be on increasing the ability of the profession to provide workers a sustainable living, many needs assessment participants also recommended strategies to build the pipeline of ECE professionals. These strategies include providing teachers with financial support to complete the trainings that are required just for onboarding into the field, creating a substitute pool to allow early educators to take needed trainings during the day, and working with high schools and community colleges to recruit potential workers into the field.

Infant and Toddler Care Strategies

Although there are not enough child care spots for children across the birth through 8 age range, the situation is most acute for infants and toddlers. Increasing care options for this age group needs to be a top priority. The primary strategy participants recommended for addressing this need is growing the number of family child care home providers in the county who serve infants and toddlers.

Family Child Care Homes. Needs assessment participants repeatedly identified growing the number and capacity of family child care homes as a promising strategy for growing infant and toddler care services in Routt County. They suggested several opportunities to create incentives for potential providers to open businesses or to encourage existing home providers to expand services to infants. Because there is a perception that licensing requirements may be a barrier to entering the market, participants recommended that First Impressions offer workshops and personalized navigation services to encourage and help potential providers to open family child care homes. Others recommended participation in or creation of a program such as Thriving Providers,[17] which provides direct cash payments to selected home-based child care providers to help them reach self-sufficiency wages while providing needed care in the community. A similar recommendation to help new and existing home

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[17] https://thrivingproviders.org/

providers start or expand services would provide cash incentives to home providers who provide infant and toddler care.

Additional ideas to support new home providers include the following:

- Create a peer network for home providers to meet regularly, learn new early childhood and business skills, and build connections to avoid feelings of isolation.
- Offer supply stipends to help new and existing providers start up or expand.
- Incentivize new construction of multi-unit housing developments to build units that meet licensing standards for home providers.
- Provide free infant and toddler trainings to build the capacity of home providers to care for this unique age group.
- Work with licensing agencies to adapt regulations that inhibit existing and potential providers from serving infants and toddlers.

Growing Options for the Immigrant Community. Some needs assessment participants identified an opportunity to help members of the immigrant community to either become family child care home providers or to become trained as ECE professionals. This would need to include recruitment materials, navigation supports, and trainings in languages other than English. Waiving E-verify requirements might also provide additional opportunities.

Family Search Enhancements

Families who participated in the needs assessment clearly identified the need to have a more coordinated and transparent system for identifying providers with availability and managing waitlists and enrollment processes. Many felt that current structures were inequitable and particularly disadvantage people with fewer resources and an inability to spend hours researching and calling providers. Because the process is currently primarily conducted in English, the existing system is particularly inequitable for non-English-speaking families.

Coordinated Website and Waitlist. Families need a way to view current openings in real time across the entire provider system in the county. To ensure equity, they also need a single, county-wide waitlist that providers can

pull from as spaces become available. The system should be viewable in both English and Spanish to provide the largest group of non-English-speaking families in the county with the same opportunity to access licensed care. This kind of system will require the cooperation and participation of providers who may need to be incentivized to participate.

Non-English Family Navigation. Families who speak a primary language other than English need support navigating the ECE system in the county. This includes translated resources as well as access to interpreters who can help them speak with systems partners, such as Resource and Referral, and with potential providers to support information gathering and program enrollment.

Affordability

Data from the needs assessment suggest that child care assistance programs may be underutilized. Families who may be eligible for programs like the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) or Head Start may not know they qualify or may not be aware of how to access it.

Increase CCCAP Participation. To reach eligible families who are not currently participating, CCCAP administrators can increase marketing of the program, provide informational resources in languages other than English, and recruit more providers to participate in the program. The latter may require raising reimbursement rates for CCCAP providers to match what they would otherwise receive in what is already a very competitive market.

Equity

The issue of equity was a consistent theme throughout this needs assessment. Families, providers, and systems partners all highlighted existing inequities in the current system and a desire to improve the situation moving forward. The greatest concern was focused on Spanish-speaking families and immigrants who have less access to formal, licensed care than their English-speaking peers.

Spanish-Speaking Providers. There is an untapped opportunity to support Spanish speakers to become ECE professionals, either working within existing centers or by starting family child care home businesses. Strategies to support this idea include offering trainings and navigation opportunities in Spanish and providing incentives and bonuses to home providers and early educators who offer services in Spanish.
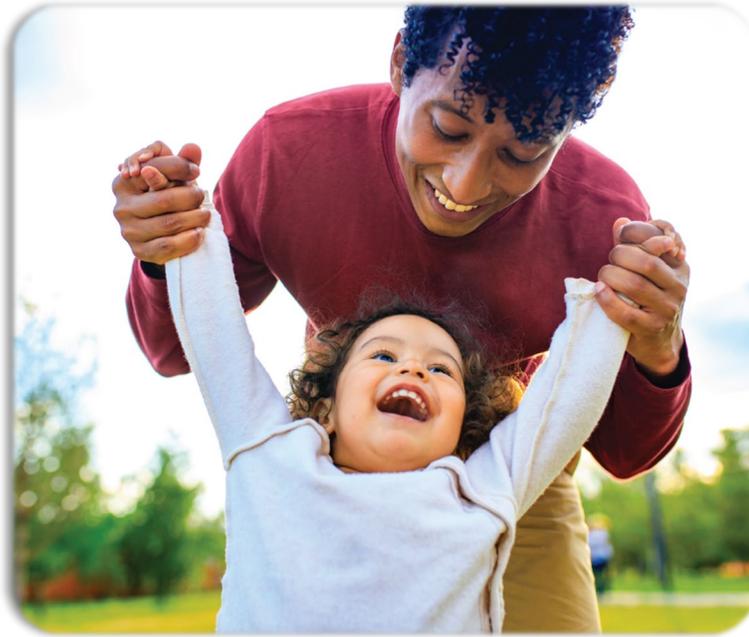
Translated Resources and Interpretation. Language barriers keep many families out of Routt's formal ECE system. Translated websites and informational materials can help all families have access to the same information, while interpretation services can help families navigate the system more easily. Participants recommended that First Impressions and the Child Care Network form a partnership with Integrated Community to help provide information and navigation services to the non-English-speaking community in Routt.

Employer Roles

Employers in Routt County are very aware of the ECE crisis. They may have faced the shortages themselves, and most have employees who are navigating the situation. Community partners and families shared that employers are generally very flexible as a result. Still, needs assessment participants shared several ideas for employers to play an even more active role in helping to solve the problem.

Family Forward Guidebook. Steamboat Springs Chamber of Commerce partnered with First Impressions several years ago to create a resource to help employers develop family-friendly policies. An update and renewed distribution of the Family Forward Guidebook may be a relatively easy way to reintroduce employers to ways they can support families.

Employer Child Care Cooperative. Not all employers have the resources to start their own on-site child care. Instead, employers can join together to support employees' child care needs in other ways, such as sponsoring new or existing child care providers to offer affordable spots to their families, paying for family child care home start-up costs, or offering pro-bono business development support to new child care providers.

Celebrating Successes. Participants recommended publicly promoting employers who are working to solve the child care crisis and who have policies that lessen the burden on families. This strategy may also include peer sharing where employers can mentor one another on ways to improve child care supply and affordability in the county.

Appendix A

Methodology

An executive committee comprised of representatives from the ECE sector, the philanthropic community, and a local immigrant support organization guided the work for this needs assessment. Members are listed in Table 4. The committee met bi-weekly from October 2022 through June 2023 and monthly between July and September 2023.

Table 4. Executive Committee Members

Name	Organization
Mark Andersen	Craig-Scheckman Family Foundation
Irene Avitia	Integrated Community
Meaghan Franges	First Impressions
Kelly Kissling	Routt County
Zoe Albright LePage	Parent
Kim Martin	Young Tracks
Pamela Nebel	First Impressions
Alexis Wolf	City of Steamboat Springs

A larger steering committee also met twice during the project to advise data collection and interpretation. Members are listed in Table 5.

Table 5. Steering Committee Members

Name	Organization
Mark Andersen	Craig-Scheckman Family Foundation
Irene Avitia	Integrated Community
Meaghan Franges	First Impressions
Selena Frentress	Totally Tots Early Childhood Center
Kelly Kissling	Routt County
Sarah Leonard	Steamboat Springs Chamber of Commerce
Zoe Albright LePage	Parent
Kim Martin	Young Tracks
Colleen Miller	Family Development Center
Laura Najera	Parent
Pamela Nebel	First Impressions
Kate Novak	Routt County United Way
Alexis Wolf	City of Steamboat Springs

The needs assessment was based on a series of research questions that drove the approach to data collection and analysis. Questions looked at the supply of and demand for ECE services for children birth through age 8. They also examined the context in which these services exist. The specific questions are listed below.

Supply

1. What is the early care and education supply in Routt County?
2. What barriers do providers face to entering or staying in the early care and education sector in Routt County?
3. What kind of supports do providers need to enter or stay in the early care and education sector in Routt County?

Demand

4. What is the demand for early care and education in Routt County?
5. What early care and education options do Routt County families need and prefer?
6. What barriers do families face in accessing early care and education?
7. What kind of supports do families need to access their preferred care?

System

8. What services and systems exist to support early care and education service providers and families with young children?
9. What additional services and supports are needed?
10. How do policy and funding shape the early care and education landscape in the county?

To answer these questions, researchers collected secondary sources of data, such as child care licensing records and census reports; conducted interviews and focus groups with systems partners, families, and ECE providers; and administered surveys of both families and ECE providers (Figure 9).

Figure 9.Data Sources

Demand	Supply	Systems
Secondary Data	Secondary Data	Secondary Data
Family Survey	Provider Survey	Systems Partner Interviews
Family Focus Groups	Provider Focus Groups	

Secondary Data. Secondary data are typically administrative sources of data that are collected for ongoing organizational or business purposes but used by researchers to help answer research questions. In the current needs assessment, researchers used secondary data from:

- Colorado's licensed child care facilities dashboard
- Family Development Center (child care resource and referral agency for Routt County)
- American Community Survey
- U.S. Census Bureau

Surveys. Butler administered two surveys as part of this needs assessment. Researchers sent a provider survey to all 42 licensed providers in the county as of February 2023 and accepted responses through April 2023. Thirty licensed providers responded for a 71% response rate. Additionally, several informal child care providers also completed the survey. To recruit families to participate in the family survey, beginning in February 2023, Butler asked all providers that participated in the provider survey to share an email and flyer with families in their programs with an invitation to participate in the family survey. Additionally, staff from First Impressions shared the survey link on their social media and left postcards with a QR code in family-friendly venues across the county. In June, Integrated Community and First Impressions coordinated to host a family event for Spanish-speaking families where they helped families access the family survey. In total, 250 families participated in

the family survey. Of the 229 families who identified their primary language, 21% identified Spanish as their primary language.

Interviews/Focus Groups. Researchers conducted eight interviews with systems-level partners in January and February 2023. Systems partners included town managers, business representatives, community service leaders, and school administrators. The executive committee identified systems partners to interview based on their understanding of and roles within the county. The research team also conducted focus groups with seven ECE providers and with 25 family members, including six Spanish-speaking family members. Providers and family members self-identified for participation in the focus groups based on their responses to a question about focus group participation within the provider and family surveys.

Appendix B

Family Demographics

Geography	Frequency	Valid Percent
Steamboat Springs	178	71%
Hayden	31	12%
North Routt	7	3%
Oak Creek, Phippsburg, and Yampa	34	14%
Race/Ethnicity	**Frequency**	**Valid Percent**
White	155	67%
BIPOC	63	27%
Prefer not to answer	12	5%
Primary Language	**Frequency**	**Valid Percent**
English	179	79%
Spanish	49	21%
Income	**Frequency**	**Valid Percent**
Under $30,000	17	8%
$30,000-$49,000	21	9%
$50,000-$69,000	19	8%
$70,000-$99,000	49	22%
Over $100,000	119	53%

Provider Demographics

Geography	Frequency	Valid Percent
Steamboat Springs	28	76%
Outside of Steamboat Springs	9	24%
Race/Ethnicity	**Frequency**	**Valid Percent**
White	30	81%
BIPOC	6	16%
Prefer not to answer	1	3%
Provider Typer	**Frequency**	**Valid Percent**
Center director/administrator	17	46%
School principal	1	3%
Family child care home owner	10	27%
Informal caregiver (such as family member, friend, neighbor)	3	8%
Teacher	4	11%
Program Coordinator	2	5%

Appendix C

Family Survey Results by Primary Language

Preferred Child Care

Statistically significant difference between groups at the .05 level

Please rate how important each of these factors are when selecting child care:

Ability to care for all your children*		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
	English	3%	3%	12%	73%	8%
	Spanish	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%

Ability to meet special physical or behavioral needs*		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
	English	6%	8%	15%	51%	20%
	Spanish	0%	7%	0%	93%	0%

Affordability*		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
	English	1%	6%	25%	68%	1%
	Spanish	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%

Caregivers who speaks your family's language*		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
	English	6%	8%	14%	28%	44%
	Spanish	2%	0%	19%	79%	0%

Transportation*		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
	English	21%	23%	21%	22%	13%
	Spanish	5%	10%	7%	76%	2%

Caregiver quality		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
	English	0%	0%	3%	97%	0%
	Spanish	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%

Location		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
	English	0%	2%	34%	64%	1%
	Spanish	0%	0%	12%	88%	0%

Hours and days of operation		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
	English	0%	2%	19%	79%	1%
	Spanish	0%	0%	2%	98%	0%

Please rank the factors that make it hard to find and access child care in Routt County?

English	
1	Availability of child care programs/providers
2	Availability of openings within child care programs
3	Cost of care
5	Information on child care options
4	Geographic distance

Spanish	
1	Availability of openings within child care programs
2	Availability of child care programs/providers
3	Cost of care
4	Information on child care options
5	Geographic distance

Needed Supports for Accessing Care

General information on what to look for in child care*		Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
	English	19%	22%	36%	23%
	Spanish	0%	5%	26%	70%

Individualized help navigating options*		Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
	English	8%	20%	39%	34%
	Spanish	0%	2%	24%	73%

Child care tuition assistance*		Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
	English	13%	9%	32%	46%
	Spanish	0%	0%	4%	96%

Universal waitlist		Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
	English	6%	8%	27%	59%
	Spanish	5%	0%	20%	75%

Website with real-time availability		Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
	English	1%	2%	13%	84%
	Spanish	3%	0%	10%	88%

Appendix D

Family Survey Results By Race/Ethnicity

Preferred Child Care

Statistically significant difference between groups at the .05 level.

Please rate how important each of these factors are when selecting child care:

Ability to care for all your children*		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
	White	3%	3%	12%	73%	8%
	BIPOC	0%	2%	2%	97%	0%
	Prefer not to answer	0%	0%	17%	67%	17%

Ability to meet special physical or behavioral needs*		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
	White	5%	9%	14%	52%	21%
	BIPOC	5%	5%	2%	84%	4%
	Prefer not to answer	0%	8%	33%	42%	17%

Affordability*		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
	White	1%	7%	27%	65%	1%
	BIPOC	0%	0%	4%	96%	0%
	Prefer not to answer	0%	0%	17%	83%	0%

Caregivers who speaks your family's		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me

language*						
	White	6%	8%	12%	28%	47%
	BIPOC	4%	4%	18%	70%	5%
	Prefer not to answer	0%	0%	42%	25%	33%

Transportation*		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
	White	22%	23%	19%	21%	15%
	BIPOC	5%	12%	14%	65%	4%
	Prefer not to answer	17%	33%	25%	25%	0%

Caregiver quality		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
	White	0%	0%	1%	99%	0%
	BIPOC	0%	0%	5%	95%	0%
	Prefer not to answer	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%

Location		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
	White	0%	3%	33%	64%	1%
	BIPOC	0%	0%	19%	81%	0%
	Prefer not to answer	0%	0%	25%	75%	0%

Hours and days of operation		Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
	White	0%	2%	18%	79%	1%
	BIPOC	0%	0%	7%	93%	0%

	Prefer not to answer	0%	0%	25%	75%	0%

Please rank the factors that make it hard to find and access child care in Routt County?

White	
1	Availability of child care programs/providers
2	Availability of openings within child care programs
3	Cost of care
4	Information on child care options
5	Geographic distance

BIPOC	
1	Availability of openings within child care programs
2	Availability of child care programs/providers
3	Cost of care
4	Information on child care options
5	Geographic distance

Needed Supports for Accessing Care

		Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
General information on what to look for in child care*	White	19%	24%	33%	24%
	BIPOC	2%	7%	37%	54%
	Prefer not to answer	33%	8%	25%	33%

		Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
Individualized help navigating options*	White	8%	19%	40%	32%
	BIPOC	0%	7%	29%	64%
	Prefer not to answer	17%	25%	17%	42%

		Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
Child care tuition assistance*					

	White	15%	9%	30%	46%
	BIPOC	0%	2%	12%	87%
	Prefer not to answer	0%	8%	42%	50%

		Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
Universal waitlist	White	6%	8%	27%	58%
	BIPOC	4%	2%	22%	73%
	Prefer not to answer	8%	0%	25%	67%

		Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
Website with real-time availability	White	1%	2%	14%	84%
	BIPOC	2%	0%	11%	87%
	Prefer not to	0%	0%	8%	92%

Appendix E

Family Survey Results By Geographic Locations

Preferred Child Care

Statistically significant difference between groups at the .05 level.

Please rate how important each of these factors are when selecting child care:

Ability to care for all your children	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Lives in Steamboat Springs	3%	2%	9%	79%	6%
Lives outside of Steamboat Springs	0%	3%	10%	80%	7%

Ability to meet special physical or behavioral needs	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Lives in Steamboat Springs	6%	8%	12%	58%	16%
Lives outside of Steamboat Springs	1%	9%	13%	63%	14%

Affordability	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Lives in Steamboat Springs	1%	5%	23%	71%	1%
Lives outside of Steamboat Springs	0%	3%	16%	81%	0%

Caregivers who speaks your family's language	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Lives in Steamboat Springs	5%	8%	18%	38%	31%
Lives outside of Steamboat Springs	4%	6%	11%	36%	43%

Transportation	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Lives in Steamboat Springs	19%	22%	14%	35%	10%
Lives outside of Steamboat Springs	16%	21%	27%	23%	13%

Caregiver quality	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Lives in Steamboat Springs	0%	0%	3%	97%	0%
Lives outside of Steamboat Springs	0%	0%	1%	99%	0%

Location	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Lives in Steamboat Springs	0%	2%	30%	68%	1%
Lives outside of Steamboat Springs	0%	1%	30%	69%	0%

Hours and days of operation	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Lives in Steamboat Springs	0%	1%	16%	82%	1%
Lives outside of Steamboat Springs	0%	1%	14%	84%	0%

Please rank the factors that make it hard to find and access child care in Routt County?

Lives in Steamboat Springs	
1	Availability of child care programs/providers
2	Availability of openings within child care programs
3	Cost of care
4	Information on child care options
5	Geographic distance

Lives outside of Steamboat Springs	
1	Availability of child care programs/providers
2	Availability of openings within child care programs
3	Cost of care
4	Geographic distance
5	Information on child care options

Needed Supports for Accessing Care

General information on what to look for in child care	Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
Lives in Steamboat Springs	14%	17%	34%	34%
Lives outside of Steamboat Springs	18%	21%	34%	28%

Individualized help navigating options	Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
Lives in Steamboat Springs	7%	16%	36%	41%
Lives outside of Steamboat Springs	6%	18%	35%	41%

Child care tuition assistance	Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
Lives in Steamboat Springs	11%	8%	25%	57%
Lives outside of Steamboat Springs	9%	6%	29%	56%

Universal waitlist	Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
Lives in Steamboat Springs	4%	6%	24%	66%
Lives outside of Steamboat Springs	9%	7%	29%	54%

Website with real-time availability	Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
Lives in Steamboat Springs	1%	1%	12%	86%
Lives outside of Steamboat Springs	1%	1%	14%	83%

Appendix F

Family Survey Results By Income

Preferred Child Care

Statistically significant difference between groups at the .05 level.

Please rate how important each of these factors are when selecting child care:

Ability to care for all your children	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Under $50,000	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
$50,000-$69,000	5%	0%	0%	89%	5%
$70,000-$99,000	4%	2%	12%	76%	6%
Over $100,000	2%	4%	13%	72%	9%

Ability to meet special physical or behavioral needs*	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Under $50,000	0%	6%	0%	94%	0%
$50,000-$69,000	0%	0%	6%	89%	6%
$70,000-$99,000	4%	6%	12%	65%	12%
Over $100,000	7%	10%	17%	42%	24%

Affordability*	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Under $50,000	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
$50,000-$69,000	6%	0%	6%	89%	0%
$70,000-$99,000	0%	0%	12%	88%	0%
Over $100,000	1%	8%	31%	59%	1%

Caregivers who speaks your family's language*	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Under $50,000	0%	0%	14%	83%	3%
$50,000-$69,000	0%	0%	6%	78%	17%
$70,000-$99,000	8%	6%	14%	24%	47%
Over $100,000	6%	9%	16%	24%	44%

Transportation	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Under $50,000	3%	6%	9%	82%	0%
$50,000-$69,000	6%	17%	6%	56%	17%
$70,000-$99,000	20%	14%	22%	31%	12%
Over $100,000	23%	28%	21%	15%	13%

Caregiver quality	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Under $50,000	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
$50,000-$69,000	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
$70,000-$99,000	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
Over $100,000	0%	0%	4%	96%	0%

Location	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Under $50,000	0%	0%	9%	91%	0%
$50,000-$69,000	0%	0%	22%	78%	0%
$70,000-$99,000	0%	2%	27%	71%	0%
Over $100,000	0%	3%	37%	60%	1%

Hours and days of operation	Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Not relevant to me
Under $50,000	0%	0%	3%	97%	0%
$50,000-$69,000	0%	0%	11%	89%	0%
$70,000-$99,000	0%	0%	14%	86%	0%
Over $100,000	0%	3%	20%	76%	1%

Please rank the factors that make it hard to find and access child care in Routt County?

Under $50,000	
1	Availability of child care programs/providers
2	Availability of openings within child care programs
3	Cost of care
4	Information on child care options
4	Geographic distance

$50,000-$69,000	
1	Availability of openings within child care programs
2	Availability of child care programs/providers
3	Cost of care
4	Information on child care options
5	Geographic distance

Needed Supports for Accessing Care

General information on what to look for in child care*	Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
Under $50,000	0%	3%	29%	69%
$50,000-$69,000	6%	11%	39%	44%
$70,000-$99,000	12%	20%	35%	33%
Over $100,000	22%	23%	35%	20%

Individualized help navigating options*	Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
Under $50,000	0%	9%	24%	67%
$50,000-$69,000	0%	11%	28%	61%
$70,000-$99,000	4%	14%	31%	51%
Over $100,000	10%	21%	41%	28%

Child care tuition assistance*	Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
Under $50,000	0%	0%	6%	94%
$50,000-$69,000	5%	0%	11%	84%
$70,000-$99,000	0%	2%	37%	61%
Over $100,000	18%	13%	29%	39%

Universal waitlist	Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
Under $50,000	0%	3%	25%	72%
$50,000-$69,000	11%	6%	22%	61%
$70,000-$99,000	4%	6%	29%	61%
Over $100,000	7%	8%	25%	61%

Website with real-time availability	Unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Helpful
Under $50,000	0%	0%	10%	90%
$50,000-$69,000	0%	0%	11%	89%
$70,000-$99,000	0%	0%	16%	84%
Over $100,000	1%	3%	13%	84%

$70,000-$99,000	
1	Availability of child care programs/providers
2	Availability of openings within child care programs
3	Cost of care
4	Information on child care options
5	Geographic distance

Over $100,000	
1	Availability of child care programs/providers
2	Availability of openings within child care programs
3	Cost of care
4	Geographic distance
5	Information on child care options

Appendix G

Provider survey results by provider type

Needed Supports for Providing ECE Services

Please rank the following supports for how helpful they would be to your stability or growth.

Center/School Directors	
1	Financing/funding
2	ECE workforce development
3	Local professional development offerings
4	Regulatory support (e.g., licensing)
5	Provider peer network
6	Administrative support (e.g., payroll, enrollment)
7	Business coaching
7	Finding/getting space
9	Marketing/outreach

Family Child Care Home Owners	
1	Regulatory support (e.g., licensing)
2	Financing/funding
3	Local professional development offerings
3	Administrative support (e.g., payroll, enrollment)
5	Provider peer network
6	Business coaching
7	ECE workforce development
7	Marketing/outreach
9	Finding/getting space

Teachers/Program Coordinators	
1	Local professional development offerings
1	Marketing/outreach
3	ECE workforce development
3	Administrative support (e.g., payroll, enrollment)
5	Financing/funding
6	Finding/getting space
7	Business coaching
8	Provider peer network
9	Regulatory support (e.g., licensing)

Appendix H

Provider survey results by geographic location

Needed Supports for Providing ECE Services

Please rank the following supports for how helpful they would be to your stability or growth.

Steamboat Springs	
1	Financing/funding
2	Local professional development offerings
3	ECE workforce development
3	Regulatory support (e.g., licensing)
5	Administrative support (e.g., payroll, enrollment)
6	Provider peer network
7	Business coaching
8	Finding/getting space
9	Marketing/outreach

Outside of Steamboat Springs	
1	Regulatory support (e.g., licensing)
2	Financing/funding
3	Local professional development offerings
4	ECE workforce development
5	Provider peer network
6	Business coaching
7	Administrative support (e.g., payroll, enrollment)
7	Marketing/outreach
9	Finding/getting space